information and/or documents furnished by the applicants. Rapidly growing workload of the Passport Offices is also contributing to pendencies.

Tourism between India and Pakistan

1469. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to encourage pilgrim between India and Pakistan, like Katasraj, Hinglaj Mata, Taksila in Pakistan and Ajmer Shariff, Nizamuddin and Charar-e-Shariff in India;

(b) the facilities being planned to encourage the pilgrim tourists; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) An Indian proposal to increase both the number of shrines and pilgrims under the Bilateral Protocol on Pilgrimages is being pursued with the Government of Pakistan for over three years. A new visa agreement is also being discussed with Pakistan which, when finalised, would help in easing travel between the two countries, including for those intending to visit religious shrines in Pakistan and India.

Claims of Gulf war victims

1470. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for SKC (Special Kuwait Cell) not disbursing the money despite the approval of United Nation Compensation Commission (UNCC) in regard to claims of the Gulf war victims from Kuwait;

(b) the efforts Government is contemplating to clear the claims of untraced persons;

(c) the basis of putting them into the category of untraced claims and the remedial measures by the Ministry; and

(d) the efforts of Government to track the untraced claimants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The deadline for submission of claims by the UNCC was 01.01.1995. The Special Kuwait Cell has already disbursed approximately US$ 1 billion in claims. This covers he preponderant majority of claims received before the deadline.

(b) to (d) The term untraced Claimants was coined by the UNCC for cases where compensation had been returned undisbursed to UNCC. The compensation could not be disbursed for a variety of reasons, such as change of address not being intimated to SKC and the UNCC reducing the permitted period of disbursement from 12 months to 6 months.

On receipt of a list of 8000 valid Untraced claimants in 2005 from the UNCC, the SKC launched a comprehensive campaign to locate the claimants and clear their claims. As a result, 3128 claimants have received their compensation amounts. However, all the untraced claimants could not be located for a variety of practical difficulties and once the final deadline of January 2008, prescribed by the UNCC for disbursement of funds to individual claimants expired, the undisbursed funds have reverted to the UNCC.